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ABSTRACT

A 3-year research project focused on whether sufficient numbers of employers could be recruited to create a national school-to-work system with a substantial work-based learning component as called for by the 1994 School-to-Work Opportunities Act. Research methods were as follows: case studies of 12 work-based learning programs at 9 sites located in both urban and rural areas; a survey of employers participating in 5 programs; and a survey of a comparison group of nonparticipating employers in those same labor markets. With regard to employers' motivations for participating in the program, employers who responded to the survey tended to characterize their involvement in philanthropic terms. In face-to-face interviews, employers cited multiple reasons--philanthropic, self-interested, and collective--for their involvement. Large firms and those with human resources practices generally considered to be "high performance" were more likely to participate. Three measures assessed the quality of work-based learning: type of occupation interns were placed in; presence or absence of particular program characteristics; and amount of internship time spent learning. Paid placements and those in which the firms intended to hire the interns permanently rated better on quality measures. Public and nonprofit organizations offered higher quality internships on some measures. Firms that engaged in high-performance workplace practices also provided higher-quality internships. (Contains 25 references.) (YLB)

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University of California, Berkeley

Employer Involvement in Work-Based Learning Programs

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Executive Summary

The 1994 School-to-Work Opportunities Act was passed by Congress with bipartisan support as a result of concern over the preparedness of American youth for the changing world of work. The legislation calls for work-based learning to be available to all students. There has been debate over whether sufficient numbers of employers can be recruited to create a national school-to-work system with a substantial work-based learning component. Recent research on the question has had mixed results. This paper reports on findings from a three-year research project focused on this question. The study consisted of (1) case studies of twelve work-based learning programs at nine different sites, located in both urban and rural areas; (2) a survey of employers participating in five of the programs; and (3) a survey of a comparison group of nonparticipating employers in those same labor markets.

Three of the twelve programs had more difficulty recruiting students than employers. In fact, two have ceased to operate because of a lack of student enrollment. Five of the programs experienced difficulty securing large numbers of employers to provide work-based learning placements. In those programs, interested students were being turned away or had to wait for a placement. Nonetheless, even though staff were still working to build a larger base of participating employers, these programs achieved wide acceptance in their respective communities, and they were successfully placing students in work-based learning positions. The final four programs were characterized by steady student demand and, if not high employer recruitment, then high employer retention. The longevity and relatively large size of these four programs demonstrates that, over time, programs can gain a reputation for benefiting both students and employers, and can become successful at recruiting both.

The fact that the main problem of some programs was that they lacked students rather than employers is significant, as it demonstrates that employer participation is not necessarily the principal challenge to creating a school-to-work system. Rather, student recruitment and parent, teacher, and counselor buy-in were all found to be significant obstacles interrelated with the problem of employer participation.

With regard to employers' motivations for participating in the program, employers who responded to the survey tended to characterize their involvement in philanthropic terms. In face-to-face interviews, employers tended to cite multiple reasons—including philanthropic, self-interested, and collective—for their involvement. Thus, employer motivations for participation are rarely pure but are more likely mixed and can change over time. The survey shows that large firms and those with human

resources practices generally considered to be "high performance" are more likely to participate.

Our aim in the fieldwork was not to evaluate the internships themselves; however, in the survey, we did include three measures to try to assess the quality of work-based learning: (1) the type of occupation interns were placed in; (2) the presence or absence of particular program characteristics; and (3) the amount of internship time spent learning. Paid placements and those in which the firms intended to hire the interns permanently rated better on our quality measures. Public and nonprofit organizations offered higher quality internships on some measures. Firms that engaged in high-performance workplace practices also provided higher-quality internships.

We conclude that employer recruitment is not an insurmountable problem. Several of the programs we studied have recruited and retained an adequate number of employers and, in some cases, have been able to sustain a high number of participants for many years. In addition, employer motivations for participation are complicated and subject to change; they likely have an effect on the quality of programs and placements. Thus, employer participation cannot be studied separately from other program features and concerns.

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Introduction

The 1994 School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) was passed by Congress with bipartisan support as a result of concern over the preparedness of American youth for the changing world of work, which has been characterized as an "emerging learning-based economy" (Urquiola et al., 1997, p. 120). In the 1980s, research demonstrated that many young adults were spending their early years in the workforce moving from one low-wage, dead-end job to another (Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, 1990; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; William T. Grant Foundation on Work, Family, & Citizenship, 1988). Jobs that were once available to high school graduates were requiring higher levels of skills (Murnane & Levy, 1996), contributing to the chronically high levels of youth unemployment. Thus, the goal of the legislation was "to facilitate the creation of a universal, high-quality school-to-work transition system that enables youths in the United States to identify and navigate paths to productive and progressively more rewarding roles in the workplace" through educator and employer partnerships (U.S. 103rd Congress, 1994, Title VIII, Section 3).[1]

The legislation calls for the following three components to be available to "all students" (Title I, section 101):

1. *School-based learning*, which shall include career awareness and career exploration and counseling; selection of a career major by interested students; state-established academic content standards; integration of academic and vocational learning; ongoing consultation with youth to identify strengths, weaknesses, and progress; and postsecondary connections (section 103)
2. *Work-based learning*, which shall include paid work experience, a planned program of job training and work experiences that are coordinated with learning in the school, workplace mentoring, instruction in general workplace competencies, and broad instruction in all aspects of the industry (section 102)
3. Appropriate *connecting activities*, some of which include matching students with employers' work-based learning opportunities; the establishment of liaisons between employers, schools, parents, and students; technical assistance, services, and training for teachers, workplace mentors, and school site mentors; and the means for the integration of school-based and work-based learning (section 104)

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[1] A more critical view, put forth by Lewis, Stone, Shipley, and Madzar (1998), is that STWOA's authors and supporters were concerned that American noncollege-bound youth were "subpar" to their counterparts elsewhere in the industrialized world, which had ramifications for our global competitiveness.

The establishment of programs with the above three components is to be achieved through educator-employer cooperation, so that what students learn in the classroom will be relevant to the workplaces of today and tomorrow. Hence, the objective is to reform secondary education in a broad-based way, integrating workplace experiences and career information with "authentic" teaching and learning in the classroom[2] so that a better connection can be made between academics and workforce preparation.

Yet the work-based learning component of the overall strategy is difficult to build and institutionalize. A widespread system of work-based learning in the form of internships and apprenticeships will need to involve thousands of employers willing to provide placements. Further, those employers need to be willing to work with schools to ensure that those placements have educational value. Employers who participate reluctantly are not likely to create a positive learning environment on the job. Thus, the process of employer recruitment has a strong bearing on the quality of internships.

Bailey (1995) identified three types of motivation that may affect employers' decisions to participate in school-to-work programs: (1) philanthropic, (2) individual benefits, and (3) collective. Employers may decide to provide work-based learning placements for philanthropic or altruistic reasons such as reaching out to the community or helping youth. Or they may decide to become school-to-work partners to bring benefits to their own firm such as the positive public relations from publicizing their contribution to education. In addition, student interns may be of use as short-term, no-cost, or low-cost labor. Work-based learning programs may also be used by employers as part of their long-term labor recruitment strategy.

Finally, there are collective reasons for employer participation. Bailey (1995) states that "one of the most common arguments for improving education in the United States is that employers lack a skilled workforce" (p. 20). The collective perspective is that while companies might not benefit immediately or directly from their own student interns, the broad implementation of school-to-work would strengthen the labor supply for all. Work-based education should help to develop a more skilled workforce overall, which should be an incentive for firms to participate.

Despite widespread endorsement of the school-to-work model and the concept of work-based learning (Bailey & Merritt, 1997; Olson, 1997), some researchers doubt whether enough employers can be recruited so that all students can have access to work-based learning through internships or apprenticeships, much less the planned program of work experience related

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[2] This approach is one in which the student is more actively engaged in the "construction" of their own knowledge. See Bailey and Merritt (1997) for a discussion of "authentic" learning, also called the "learner-centered" approach to teaching.

with the school that the legislation calls for. Osterman (1995) estimates that even if only 25% of high school juniors and seniors eventually participate in school-to-work programs, 1.5 million work placements will be needed each year. Osterman contends that high-quality training programs that teach skills ask too much of employers and are, thus, unlikely to be replicated; hence, "the prospects for widespread employer participation seem bleak" (p. 79). Klein (1995) evaluated the economic incentives for employer participation in school-to-work initiatives and found that while participation may provide employers with some economic benefits, market-based policies will be needed as further incentives.

The results from research on actual programs are mixed. Mathematica Policy Research's study of the School-to-Work Transition/Youth Apprenticeship Demonstration sites (Corson & Silverberg, 1994; Hershey & Silverberg, 1993) finds that the implementation of youth apprenticeship programs poses "a substantial burden on employers" and raises doubts about the potential for widespread employer participation (Hershey & Silverberg, 1993, p. 9). Others are also pessimistic about the potential for recruiting numerous employers (Office of Technology Assessment, 1995; Stern, 1995).

Yet other research finds that employer recruitment and retention can be achieved. Jobs for the Future's National Youth Apprenticeship Initiative, a study of ten programs around the country from 1991 to 1994, found that while most of the programs began with a focus in one industry, almost all increased the number of participating industries and occupational areas over time. Kopp, Kazis, and Churchill (1995), in their report *Promising Practices*, state that "the programs have significant and sustained employer involvement, and the intensity of employer involvement has increased over time" (p. 10). Another study of cooperative education sites found that "employer recruitment was not a significant problem and that there were generally enough employer slots for the referral of eligible students" (Lynn & Wills, 1994, p. 23). Other researchers hold positive views on the likelihood of widespread employer involvement (Kazis & Goldberger, 1995; Wieler & Bailey, 1997; Zemsky, 1994).

This paper reports on findings from a three-year research project focused primarily on the question of whether sufficient numbers of employers can be recruited in order to create a national school-to-work system with a substantial work-based learning component. The research attempted to answer the following questions:

- Can employers be recruited?
- What strategies are used to recruit employers, and which are successful?
- What deters potential employer participants from becoming involved?
- Why do employers initially become involved, and why do they stay involved?

- Why do employers leave the programs, and do many leave once involved?
- Is there a relationship between employers' motivations and the structure and quality of programs?
- What are the differences between the characteristics of participating employers and nonparticipants?
- What might encourage nonparticipants to get involved?

By better understanding the motivations and characteristics of participants and how those relate to the quality of placements, we hope to help program operators find an adequate number of high-quality placements.[3]

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[3] This report assumes that the programs in question see business participation as desirable, as the STWOA promotes, and does not address the broader question of whether business involvement in education is a good idea or not. For a discussion of the benefits and dangers of business involvement in education reform, see Mickelson (1999).

Methods

The study consisted of (1) case studies of twelve programs at nine sites, located in both urban and rural areas; (2) a survey of employers participating in five of the programs; and (3) a survey of a comparison group of nonparticipating employers in those same labor markets. In choosing sites, we sought programs with a strong work-based learning component. Some school-to-work initiatives offer students one-day job-shadowing opportunities or short-term mentors from the business community, and while these activities are certainly valuable, programs in which students spend regular and significant amounts of time at workplaces require the most commitment from employers. Further, as we wanted to determine why the most involved employers had chosen to participate, we looked at programs in which employers take in students as interns or apprentices over the course of one school year or two. The twelve programs selected, which include some new as well as some older, more established programs, are described in Table 1.

From the fall of 1995 through the spring of 1996, we conducted at least one and in some cases two site visits to each of the twelve programs. Since the site visits, we have regularly followed up with the programs. At each program or school, interviews were conducted with students, teachers, counselors, principals, and intermediaries that were brokering the participation of employers. Researchers observed classes, particularly any that purported to link the work-based learning component with the classroom curriculum. We also visited worksites and interviewed employers, including the human resources staff who coordinated the student interns, as well as the individuals who supervised and mentored the students. We asked whether the school-to-work programs were developed with employer initiative or input, how the sites recruited and worked with employers, and what methods program personnel use to continue to recruit employers. One focus was whether there is attrition among participating employers in the already-established programs, and if so, why. We asked employers about their motivations for involvement, and what factors would encourage or discourage their continued participation.

Five of the twelve programs had more than 40 employer participants each. These programs, City-as-School in New York City; Kalamazoo County Education for Employment in Kalamazoo, Michigan; the cooperative education program at LaGuardia Community College in New York City; the Greater Lehigh Valley Youth Apprenticeship Program in Pennsylvania; and the Philadelphia Education for Employment School-to-Careers Program became our survey sites. We asked each program for a list of active employer partners. We then attempted to create a matching sample of nonparticipating

Table 1: Research Sites

	LaGuardia Community College (NYC)	City-as-School (NYC)	Kalamazoo County (MI) Education for Employment	Flint Manufacturing Technologies Partnership; Careers in Health; Financial Learning Academy of Genesee	Philadelphia Education for Employment School-to-Careers Program
Program Started	1971	1972 as NYC alternative school	1986; employer-initiated	MTP: initiated by GM in 1991 CIH: 1980 FLAG: 1995 (also employer-initiated: Citizens Bank)	Received foundation funds in 1990 to extend academies' concept for all kids; EFE began in 1992
Program Structure	Two-year program, approx. 2,000 students complete two internships; attempt to match placements with students' majors	950 students in 10th-12th grades; academic and elective credits given for work experiences; students spend little time in the classroom	2,300 students 8th-12th grades; different varieties of work-based learning offered in the 11th and 12th grades; 24 career areas; half-day programs	MTP: 89 students CIH: 250 students FLAG: 24 students MTP: two-year program CIH: one- or two-year program FLAG: two-year program All are half-day programs.	1,000 students participating; curriculum starts in 9th grade but work-based learning only in 11th and 12th; "theme" areas are manufacturing, business, health, hospitality and tourism, printing, and transportation; these located in different schools
Worksite Structure	Some positions paid, some unpaid; students work for 13-week periods, part-time or full-time	Unpaid positions last for 8-week cycles; full-time or part-time; by graduation, students have had 8-12 work experiences	varies by career area; ex: health students work 3-4 hours, 2-3 days a week in 12th grade; unpaid	MTP: paid work two hours every day CIH: same schedule, unpaid FLAG: at worksites 3 hrs., 3 days per week; work when projects available	Juniors work 1-2 days per week; seniors can work more; internships substitute for class time and are paid
Employer Characteristics	Over 300 employers of all types	352 employers of all types	117 employers of all types	MTP: GM and 12 others CIH: 3 hospitals, one HMO FLAG: 2 banks, one CPA firm	179 employers of all types in the "theme" areas

Table 1 (cont.)

	Monroe #1 BOCES, NY: Medical Careers Program, Graphic Communications Program	High School of Economics & Finance (NYC)	Greater Lehigh Valley Youth Apprenticeship Program	Madison-Oneida BOCES, NY: Manufacturing Technologies Program
Program Started	Medical Careers Program developed in 1993; graphics/printing program began in 1995 and is no longer operating	1993	1994; initiated by area superintendents and business leaders; is no longer operating	1994 started at BOCES with business input; program no longer operating
Program Structure	Full-day senior year health occupations program; 40 students maximum; students alternate between ten weeks at school and ten weeks at the hospital; printing program had same structure but only enrolled 7 students	Magnet high school in NYC; "theme" is business and finance; 3 internships required; 450 students in 1995-1996	85 students; two-year, full-day program; students alternate one week classes at magnet schools and one week full-time work; newly developed applied curriculum	9 students graduated 1996; one-year, half-day manufacturing technologies program; mornings either in BOCES applied classes or at worksite; afternoons at regular high schools
Worksite Structure	Unpaid; students work about 3 hours per day during the two ten-week periods at the hospital; have classroom at hospital	2 unpaid and 1 paid internships; work done on Wed. afternoons or after school hours; some connecting activities and theme curriculum	students paid at prevailing wage rates; work full-time every other week during school year for up to two years with the same employer	Unpaid internships; first semester students rotate around firm, second semester stay in one area; work two hours per day, 2-3 days per week
Employer Characteristics	Rochester General Hospital; printing program was industry-initiated and supported by the local chapter of the Printing Industry of America; many employers interested	all types of employers: nonprofits, for-profits, city agencies, etc.; at least 40 employers	all types of employers; 44 at the time of our visit; Lehigh Business-Education Partnership already existed; much use of employer organizations	4 firms in manufacturing; all firms on board since the beginning

establishments in the area. To do this, we used the Dun and Bradstreet Database, which lists a broad firm size category (less than 10 employees, 10-49 employees, more than 50 employees) and SIC code for all known establishments in a given geographic region (this data is accessed online and updated monthly; we used it in March of 1996). We first calculated a size-industry breakdown for the participating establishments in each program along the three size categories and ten 1-digit SIC categories. We then used the Dun and Bradstreet Database to calculate a similar size-industry breakdown for all establishments in the programs' regions. Based on a predicted 60% response rate for participating establishments and a 25% response rate for nonparticipating establishments, we created equal-sized samples of participating and nonparticipating establishments. The nonparticipants were somewhat oversampled in the industry-size groups where the internships were concentrated, while the participant sample was proportionate to the participant population in industry-size breakdown.

We then sent a letter to each of the establishments in our samples to advise them of the survey and ask for their cooperation. Next, we conducted about 50 pretest surveys and revised the questionnaire based on the responses from those pretests. The resulting questionnaire had an average response time of about 30 minutes. The final survey was conducted from May to August of 1996. It was broken down into two major sections. The first section for participants asked for information about the firm's participation in the program, and was answered by the person supervising the interns or coordinating the firm's participation. In the nonparticipant version, the first section asked about hypothetical concerns that firms might have about participating in a school-to-work program. The second section (for both samples) asked for general characteristics of the establishment—employee demographics and turnover, human resources policies, and so on—and was answered by a human resources manager. Out of 548 participating employers and 900 nonparticipating employers on our list, we gathered 334 complete responses from participating employers and 323 from nonparticipants, resulting in response rates of 61% and 35.9% respectively.[4]

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[4] For a full discussion of the survey and survey methods, see Bailey, Hughes, and Barr (1998).

Findings

The 12 programs can be divided into three categories according to whether they lack students, employers, or neither. Three of the programs—the New Visions Medical Careers and New Visions Graphic Communications programs, both sponsored by the Eastern Monroe Career Center, and the Madison-Oneida Manufacturing Technologies Program—had more difficulty recruiting students than employers. In fact, the latter two have ceased to operate because of a lack of student enrollment. The fact that the main problem of some programs was that they lacked students, rather than employers, is significant, as it demonstrates that employer participation is not necessarily the principal challenge to creating a school-to-work system.

Once there was steady student demand, five of the programs—Education for Employment School-to-Careers in Philadelphia; the Greater Lehigh Valley Youth Apprenticeship in Pennsylvania; the New York City High School of Economics and Finance; the Financial Learning Academy of Genesee in Flint, Michigan; and the Flint Manufacturing Technologies Partnership—experienced difficulty securing large numbers of employers to provide work-based learning placements. In those programs, interested students were being turned away or had to wait for a placement. Nonetheless, even though staff were still working to build a larger base of participating employers, these programs achieved wide acceptance in their respective communities, and they were successfully placing students in work-based learning positions.

Four of the programs—LaGuardia Community College; Careers in Health in Flint, Michigan; City-as-School in New York City; and Kalamazoo County Education for Employment in Michigan—are characterized by steady student demand and, if not high employer recruitment, then high employer retention. The longevity and relatively large size of these four programs demonstrates that, over time, programs can gain a reputation for benefiting both students and employers, and can become successful at recruiting both.

Employer Recruitment and Retention: Why Do Firms Participate?

Employer involvement in the early initiation and development phases occurred in all but two of the twelve programs. Only City-as-School and LaGuardia Community College were created solely by educators, while in all the other cases employers participated in initial discussions of how the programs would be structured, either formally through educator/employer

boards (as in Lehigh and Kalamazoo) or informally by way of personal networking with education administrators (as in Rochester).

The dialogue that occurs between educators and employers during the formation of a program can determine the philosophy of the program. In some programs, internships are considered and called "learning experiences," and the aim is to treat interns as students and expose them to a wide range of workplace activities. In other programs, internships are called "jobs," and employers use interns as they would regular employees. Thus, the motivation behind the employers' involvement—do they want to be seen as partners in improving the education system, or do they want to train and hire labor—shapes the program.

To successfully recruit employer partners, educators determine what employers' potential motivations are and speak to those motivations. If employers' motivations helped determine the goals of the program in the first place, employer recruitment is simplified; program staff will know whether their pitch to employers should be "help young people" while students primarily observe and assist other workers as an "extra pair of hands," or "train and hire your own labor." While both strategies can be successful at recruiting and retaining employers, they make different assumptions about employers' incentives and demand different conduct from them.

The Philanthropic Motivation

More than half of the participating employers who responded to our survey claimed some philanthropic factor as their most important reason for participating (see Table 2).[5] One-fourth of the employers cited an interest in contributing to the community as their primary motivation, and one-third said that their most important reason was to improve the public education system. Nevertheless, a substantial minority—about one-third—identified self-interested reasons as their motivations for participating. On the other hand, while the majority of participants chose philanthropic reasons, over three-fourths of the nonparticipants looked to internships for self-interested reasons. These comparisons should be made with caution since the answers for participants were based on experience while those for nonparticipants were hypothetical. In addition, those who are participating might not want to present their involvement as self-serving, while nonparticipants would have no reason to couch potential participation in altruistic terms.

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[5]These results were acquired as follows: A list of possible reasons for participating in the program (or potentially participating in a program, for nonparticipants) was read to the respondent. The respondent could rate each factor as not important or important. The interviewer then read back all those rated by the respondent as important and asked which factor the respondent considered most important.

In face-to-face interviews with employers, we did hear the philanthropic point of view, but employers rarely put this forth as the sole or most important incentive for their involvement. For example, the owner of an electrical wiring company who participated in the Lehigh Valley apprenticeship program said that participation is "the right thing to do" but also sees the program as "mutually beneficial." Many program coordinators, however, said that they did use the philanthropic "pitch." One school-to-careers coordinator from Philadelphia said that a selling point is to tell an employer, "Here are children from your own community that you can actually directly help." She stated that employers like to work with a particular school in their own community. Another internship coordinator said that she has certain employers to whom she can send the most troubled students; she knows that those employers will continue in the program however little they receive from their participation. The impression of a teacher at New York City's High School of Economics and Finance is that employers become involved because "they feel sorry for inner-city public school kids."

Yet coordinators from other programs told us that, although participating employers often cite philanthropic reasons for their involvement, they do not usually emphasize altruism when making their pitches to employers. Some of those whose job it is to recruit employers told us that urging them to "give back to the community" can backfire if the implication is that they do not do so already.

The Individual Benefits Appeal

Public Relations

We were told by the staff of Philadelphia's school-to-work initiative that Philadelphia's hospitals use their participation in the program for public relations purposes. A bandwagon effect has even been created among the city's different hospitals. Thus, initial employer involvement can help program personnel succeed with further recruitment; the program is given legitimacy in the eyes of other employers, and nonparticipants may feel compelled to become involved so they do not look bad in comparison with participants.

Labor Need

Because student interns are either free or are paid a low hourly wage and given no benefits, some employers use school-to-work programs as temporary agencies; the costs of supervising students evidently do not outweigh the benefits of the students' labor. Ten percent of our survey respondents said that they participated so that they could hire part-time or

short-term workers. Another 10% said that the program gives them access to a pool of qualified workers.[6]

The Flint FLAG program is an example of firms benefiting from cheap labor. While the creation of the program was spurred by a local bank's concern about the area's labor pool, the program was structured so that the participating firms can use the students in the program as temporary help. When a firm has a project or task that a student can assist with, the firm contacts a program staff member, who matches a student to the project. Students leave their worksite classrooms for these "earning projects" which can last from one day to several weeks, and students are paid $5.00 per hour for this work. One such student helped a bank put into place a new computer software system, but other "earning projects" are more mundane such as microfilming and shredding. Firms participating in this program are clearly gaining low-cost, productive labor.

An employer who takes interns from New York City's High School of Economics and Finance was clear about the firm's use of the students as "extra help," and said they probably could not take interns if they had to pay them. When we asked a focus group of students from this school why they thought employers become involved with them, the students said almost simultaneously, "Free labor!" While the student responses weren't all negative, one student in particular had the impression from her internship that employers take interns not to give them a learning experience but simply to do their most tedious work.

Employers also use school-to-work programs to recruit permanent, full-time employees. A railway maintenance yard for Philadelphia's SEPTA public transportation system is successfully using the city's school-to-career system to recruit apprentices; at this worksite, student interns follow a demanding curriculum created by the yard's assistant director especially for the program, and are paid $9.60 an hour. The director of the now-defunct Lehigh Valley Youth Apprenticeship program pitched the benefits of trained labor and the problem of local skills shortages to potential participants. The Flint Manufacturing Technologies Partnership with General Motors came out of that company's need for skilled trades apprentices. Through this program, in partnership with area education officials and the union, GM can rely on a steady stream of young recruits who are prepared for the apprenticeship examination. The program now has three General Motors plants taking a total of thirty-four students in the Flint area, and has been replicated in other parts of Michigan. In addition, twenty non-GM

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[6] In a survey of employers participating in work-based learning programs that was carried out by the Office of Technology Assessment (1995), nearly two-thirds of employers cited recruitment goals as the most important reason for their participation.

employers take student interns because, according to the program director, "Skilled labor is impossible to find in Genesee County."

Boosting the Morale and Enthusiasm of Regular Employees

In face-to-face interviews, some employers said that having to teach their job to an interested young person renews employees' pride in their work. The director of community relations at a Philadelphia hospital said that the hospital personnel working with the students received gratification from having young people look up to them. This lends support to the findings of Kazis and Goldberger (1995), who state that "employers report . . . that having young people in their workplaces motivates existing employees . . . and improves the quality of supervision and coaching, for the adult work force as well as for the young people" (pp. 188-189; also see Klein, 1995).

The Collective Appeal

Possible responses to the survey questions about employers' motivations included items representing collective reasons; these were "encouragement from industry groups or other employers" and "increased training is necessary for your industry to remain competitive." As one can see from Table 2, neither participants nor nonparticipants tended to choose either of these as their most important reason for participating or for considering participation.

Table 2. Primary Motivations for Participation: Participants vs. Nonparticipants

	Participants	Nonparticipants
Primary motivation to participate is/would be		
Local labor shortage	3.0%	4.3%
Opportunity to test potential employees	5.8%	15.9%
Part-time/short-term hiring	10.3%	24.1%
Improving public education system	33.1%	9.1%
Encouragement from industry groups	0.6%	1.4%
Reducing expense of benefits	2.7%	1.9%
Contributing to community	25.8%	11.9%
Access to prescreened applicants	3.7%	5.1%
Increased training necessary	4.6%	5.0%
Access to pool of qualified workers	10.3%	21.3%

N = 329 for participants, 295 for nonparticipants. Standard errors of estimates are under 1.3%.

Another type of collective motivation that we found in the fieldwork is the goal of marketing an industry as a whole to young people. The Lehigh Valley electrical wiring company owner characterized his participation as

a "selling job." He pointed out that the work done by his employees is perceived as dirty and unglamorous; thus, he appreciated having the opportunity to teach a wide audience, educators as well as students, about the more modern and technical aspects of his industry. Employers in the printing industry helped create the New Visions Graphic Communications program in an attempt to do a "selling job" of their industry to young people; the industry was suffering because of the difficulty of recruiting new talent.

The goal of the Flint FLAG program is to upgrade the skills of the area labor force as a whole, which could ultimately benefit all the local employers. Similarly, in Flint Careers in Health, the successful half-day medical occupations program, the participating employers hope that the program will induce locally trained youth to stay in the area.

Concerns of Employers

The survey also asked employers what would motivate them *not* to participate (see Table 3). Participants are much more concerned than nonparticipants about students' lack of basic skills (nearly 27% of participants listed this as their biggest concern) and their unreliability or immaturity. This finding is supported by an in-depth study of one of our survey sites, which demonstrated a high attrition rate for employer participants. Indeed, half of the employers who participated in that program between 1984 and 1995 participated for only one internship cycle (Wieler & Bailey, 1997). While we do not know exactly what led employers to leave that program, it seems that in some cases experience with interns does not improve employer attitudes about their potential productivity. When we asked our participants under what circumstances would their firm increase

Table 3. Factors That Discourage Participation: Participants vs. Nonparticipants

	Participants	Nonparticipants
Primary motivation *not* to participate is/would be		
Employee resistance	1.4%	5.1%
Lost productivity for trainers	15.4%	23.2%
Students might leave after training	4.8%	15.0%
Opposition from unions	3.4%	1.7%
Uncertain economic climate	3.9%	4.1%
Students lack basic skills	26.9%	9.0%
OSHA/child labor law violations	9.6%	10.1%
Students not always available	9.6%	10.2%
Students are unreliable or immature	22.1%	15.8%
Student wages are too costly	1.4%	4.4%
Problems working with schools	1.4%	1.4%

N = 208 for participants, 279 for nonparticipants. Standard errors of estimates are under 1.9%.

the number of interns they take, just over 10% offered skills-related replies such as "if the students were more qualified" and "if the first intern had been more impressive."

As in previous studies, ours finds that both participating and nonparticipating employers are much more concerned about the indirect costs of training students than they are about the direct costs of paying students (though only about half of internships are paid). Of the 32 nonparticipants who said they had previously turned down requests from schools, eight said they had done so because they were concerned about the time it would take to train the interns, while only two cited direct cost-related reasons. Of those nonparticipants who had never before been approached, but who said they would not become involved if asked, about one-third said simply that they had no need for interns, while smaller proportions said they had no time to train or supervise interns, or their companies were too small, or there was no space for interns.

Summary

What can we conclude from these data about the motivations and concerns of employers? Clearly, motivation is not an either/or issue. In all of the cases from the fieldwork, even the most philanthropically motivated employers also hoped to benefit individually through their participation. For example, the successes of City-as-School High School rest on a key trade-off: In exchange for their willingness to help at-risk youth, employers get free labor. Yet, as a program staff member put it, the employers must have a great deal of altruism because otherwise "they wouldn't be doing it with all the problems the kids have."

It is hard to argue from the survey data that most firms are participating out of a conviction that it will advance their business in a direct way. There is some evidence in our study that philanthropic motivations could support a reasonably large school-to-work program; City-as-School places hundreds of students each year and has been doing so for over 15 years. On the other hand, our survey shows (as will be detailed later in this report) that public sector and not-for-profit organizations have been the mainstay of the participant pool. To penetrate the for-profit world more successfully, program operators will have to convince employers that participation will be in their firms' interests.

Employer Participation: Which Firms Participate?

Many firms in the United States have been providing internships, apprenticeships, and other forms of work-based learning for many years. To identify nonparticipants, we telephoned employers and asked them if they were providing or had provided internships. According to our data, almost 25% of employers already provide internships. This estimate is

probably higher than a national participation rate would be, however, given that we selected these cities because they already had large and well-established internship programs. Moreover, many of these internships may not be as ambitious as those envisioned by school-to-work supporters. For example, there may be very little coordination between the school and the workplace experience. Nevertheless, these data suggest that a substantial number of employers in these areas, especially the larger employers, are already participating in work-based learning programs of some kind. In addition, of the employers who constituted our nonparticipant sample, only 18% had ever been approached and asked to participate (and declined). This implies that the market of potential employer partners is still largely untapped.

Firm Size

From our survey, we found that large firms are more likely to provide internships than smaller firms, although a substantial number of smaller firms do participate. It is likely that program operators looking for placements go to the large firms first, since such firms are more likely to be able to provide multiple placements. Large firms are also more likely to have specialized community relations departments and human resources staff who can oversee an internship program. In addition, being more visible, large firms might have more incentive to engage in public service activities.

The Type of Work Organization

An additional significant factor is the type of work organization in a firm. Compared to the nonparticipants we surveyed, participating employers provide more training for their employees in general, and tend to have more progressive human resource practices such as job rotation, self-managed teams, quality circles, Total Quality Management, and profit sharing. One interpretation is that internships are an integral part of a broad human resource strategy, suggesting that as (or if) firms move toward more progressive strategies, employer recruitment will be easier. Programs could also direct recruitment efforts towards these firms.

Sectors: Private For-Profit, Private Not-for-Profit, and Public

A striking finding from the surveys is that less than 50% of the participants are for-profit, while 90% of the nonparticipants are for-profit. It is likely that appeals to "help out" the community or local school system are more effective with the not-for-profit and public sectors than with profit-making firms. Moreover, not-for-profits are often short of cash, and interns might be attractive as cheap labor. Cash constraints may simply make it impossible to hire additional employees, so such organizations may be faced with the choice of taking an unpaid intern or doing without anyone. Indeed,

unpaid interns are definitely overrepresented among the not-for-profit participants.

Quality of Work-Based Learning

Our aim in the fieldwork was not to evaluate the internships themselves; however, in the survey, we did include three measures to try to assess the quality of work-based learning: (1) the type of occupation interns were placed in, (2) the presence or absence of particular program characteristics, and (3) the amount of internship time spent learning. We also explored various determinants of the latter two quality measures.

Type of Industry and Occupation

An important finding is that the industry sectors and occupations in which the interns are working are different from those in which youth in general are working (see Table 4). For example, the internships are not concentrated in retail, the traditional youth-employing sector. The majority of the participating employers (65.7%) are in the service sector, in a diverse group of occupations that includes health, education, and business services. Nearly half of the internships (45.3%) are in administrative support positions—entry-level jobs in office and business employment. Interns are also overrepresented in technical occupations, while relatively few are in machine operative positions and other areas of youth concentration. The overrepresentation in technical jobs is encouraging since employers often have difficulty filling these positions; some employers may be using school-to-work internships to strengthen their pool of available labor. It is a positive finding that the time and effort spent in acquiring internship positions is not resulting in placements identical to the jobs students already tend to have.

Program Characteristics

The survey asked about the program components (or practices) that are often considered part of the school-to-work model. We believe the presence of these components indicates a better planned and implemented work-based learning initiative. The model has ten components (see Table 5). The firms' responses were added together (as zero-one variables) to develop an index, with a value from zero to ten, for the intensity of the internship (hereafter referred to as "intensity").

About 70% of the firms had between three and six of these practices. The average number of practices at each firm was four. The large majority of firms provided a mentor and claimed to document and assess student learning on the job. Internships in a large majority of the firms also involved a written agreement between the student and the school and the rotation of students among several positions. In contrast, far fewer employers

Table 4. Distribution of Internships by Industry and Occupation

Industrial Sector	Participants	Youth (National)
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	1.5%	4.9%
Mining	0.0%	0.5%
Construction	0.5%	6.4%
Manufacturing	5.7%	12.3%
Transportation, Communications, Utilities	2.3%	2.9%
Wholesale Trade	1.3%	2.6%
Retail Trade	9.2%	38.4%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	6.8%	4.1%
Services	65.7%	25.7%
Public Administration	7.0%	2.2%
Occupational Category	**Participants**	**Youth (National)**
Managerial/Professional	3.8%	5.0%
Technical	11.0%	1.7%
Sales	18.1%	16.0%
Administrative Support	45.3%	15.8%
Service	11.5%	26.3%
Farm	3.1%	5.8%
Craftsman	3.1%	8.1%
Operative/Laborer	4.0%	21.3%

The reported numbers for the participants are taken from the sample and weighted by number of interns. Standard errors for participant column are under 2%. Youth sample consists of 18-21 year olds reporting at least 5 hours a week of work, taken from 1995 CPS; standard errors of estimates are less than 1%. CPS national sample comes from workers 15 years or older reporting at least 5 hours a week of work, taken from 1995 CPS; standard errors of estimates are less than 0.25%.

engaged in active participation with the schools—about one-third advised schools on the curricula, only one-fourth had staff make presentations at the school, and one-fifth provided classrooms at the site.

Findings from our fieldwork demonstrate that figures like these can present a misleading picture, however. When we asked students about their "mentors," we found that in many cases these individuals simply kept track of the students' hours. In several cases, the intern rarely saw his or her mentor at all; the term "mentor," then, was a misnomer. Also, while the vast majority of firms responding to our survey replied that student work was documented and assessed, we found in our fieldwork that this often consisted of a basic check-off sheet completed by the student's supervisor.

Internship Duration and Learning Time

The amount of time it takes an intern to learn the assigned job is a measure of the amount of learning represented by the placement. Clearly, a job that can be learned in a day has less educational value than one that takes a month to learn. Since internships take time away from other educational

experiences, such as homework or extracurricular activities, as much time as possible during the internship should be spent learning.

We asked participating employers that responded to our survey how many weeks their internships lasted, how many hours per week the interns generally worked, and how many eight-hour days it took for the student to learn his or her job or duties. We found that, on average, the internships lasted almost 23 weeks, it took 14 days to learn the jobs, and the interns were spending only about 14% of their time on the job learning. When we compare paid internships to unpaid ones, we find that paid placements have a higher mean percentage of time learning and a higher program intensity score, the index measuring the number of program components (from Table 5). These quality measures are also higher for those firms who intend to hire their interns. The government sites have the highest program intensity, but the internship jobs in the private for-profit sector score highest on the learning-time variable.

Table 5. Common Components of School-to-Work Programs

Component	Percent of Firms Practicing
1. A written agreement between school and student	65.5%
2. A customized training plan designed specifically for each student	47.3%
3. Student learning at the worksite is documented and assessed	90.0%
4. A workplace mentor or supervisor who counsels students and teaches job-related skills	95.5%
5. Rotation of students among several jobs	61.5%
6. Training for mentors or supervisors	33.4%
7. Company provides classrooms at the worksite	20.2%
8. Company serves on the advisory board of the program	14.9%
9. Employer advises schools on content of curriculum	36.8%
10. Company staff teaches or makes presentations to students at the school	24.7%

Standard errors of estimates are less than 1.5%

Table 6 presents regressions of the determinants of three of our quality measures: (1) program intensity, (2) learning time, and (3) the learning ratio. (These analyses include controls for the five programs in case there are systematic quality differences among the programs.) The program intensity regression suggests that public and nonprofit organizations and those that hire permanently tend to provide higher quality internships. Firms that

pay their interns appear to score higher in terms of the internships' learning times (the time it takes to learn the job assigned to the intern), and the not-for-profits have internships with the shortest learning times. Only the not-for-profit-sector variable is significant (and it is negative) in the percent of learning time regression. One problem with the analysis is that for-profit status, paid internships, and the intention to hire are all positively correlated,[7] so the regression has trouble differentiating among them. It is interesting, however, that the size of the organization is not related to any of the measures of quality. It may be that nonprofits in particular do try to provide good learning experiences and therefore tend to follow program guidelines by introducing the types of practices measured by the intensity variable. On the other hand, the nature of the jobs that they have available

Table 6. Regression of Program Quality Measures on Firm Characteristics: T-Statistics in Parentheses

	Program Intensity (Ordered Probit Regression)	Learning Time (OLS Regression)	Percent of Time Learning (OLS Regression)
Logarithm of Establishment Employment Size	0.13 (0.83)	.48 (.60)	0.00 (0.10)
Firms that Hire	0.35** (2.65)	3.29 (1.19)	0.04 (1.54)
Firms that Pay	-0.09 (0.51)	7.15* (1.82)	-0.00 (0.10)
Not-for-Profit Sector	0.29* (1.90)	-7.77** (-2.41)	-0.05* (1.77)
Government Sector	0.64** (3.28)	-2.80 (-0.70)	-0.01 (0.37)
No. Observations	274	261	229
Ln Likelihood	-526.33		
Model Chi^2/ Model F-statistic	34.11 (0.00)	4.95 (0.00)	2.03 (0.04)
Pseudo R^2/ Adjusted R^2	0.03	.12	0.04

* Significant at the 10% level
** Significant at the 1% level

[7] In Table 6, each of these variables when analyzed alone is positively related to the learning time measures.

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may not allow them to give interns positions that inherently have a high learning content.

We also asked our survey respondents what level of education a regular (nonstudent) employee, in the same position as the intern, would have. Internships at sites where a college-educated worker would otherwise perform the work score lower on our quality measures than at sites where a worker with a high school or two-year college education would otherwise do the work. This suggests that internships are best at sites where students are not too far behind other workers, rather than sites where the skill differentials are so great that students do separate work entirely. Not seeing the interns as potentially productive workers in their assigned tasks, the employers may pay less attention to them. The jobs that could otherwise be filled with workers without a high school degree also tend to score lower on the quality measures. These are probably typical teenage jobs that offer few opportunities to learn. Thus, this analysis suggests that internships are most productive when they involve jobs in which the interns could realistically be expected to be productive, but that still demand skills and abilities that the interns do not already have.

We mentioned earlier that firms that provided more training for their workers and that had more progressive human resource practices ("high performance workplaces") were more likely to provide work-based learning. The data indicate that firms that engaged in these practices also provided higher-quality internships (on all of our measures except the ratio of learning time to program duration).

The Established Programs

A more in-depth description and analysis of the four stable programs is a useful exercise, as these initiatives are very different from each other regarding occupational focus, structure, and philosophy. Their long-term success with employer recruitment and retention can be attributed to the kind of local research and strategizing that the newer programs engage in. This points out that the wider discussion of employer participation has perhaps been too abstract so far because the conditions for employer-educator partnerships are locally determined.

Flint Careers in Health (CIH)

Careers in Health, an award-winning half-day medical occupations program, was started in a health magnet public school in an inner-city area in 1982. The program, begun as a pilot with eleven students, offered unpaid internships at Hurley Hospital, a teaching hospital that was accustomed to having students on-site, even high school students. To broaden student access, the administration of the program was moved in 1988 to the area vocational-technical center (GASC). The approximately 250 students now enrolled each year come from 32 different high schools. Most are juniors,

but students have the option of returning to the program for their senior year. Currently, Hurley Hospital takes about 100 students a year; a second hospital takes 80, and a third takes 40. Students receive some basic medical training at the GASC before starting three-week rotations through seven different areas at the worksites for two hours every day. Placements have also been found in medical offices and in health maintenance organizations for students who are interested in the non-clinical health field.

According to the program creator and coordinator, it has not been very difficult to convince other healthcare facilities to participate. A teacher agreed that they can acquire placements for students fairly easily; at the time of our visit, they had just added a placement in a physical therapy office. Area hospitals and medical offices are competitive for business, so they do not want any one hospital receiving recognition and credit for hosting an educational internship program. One hospital, which was initially reluctant to become involved in the program, came on board when program staff told the CEO that a new brochure was going to highlight the program's employer partners: the competitors of this particular hospital. The vice president of human resources at this hospital, who was at first against participating because of his negative stereotypes of Flint high school students, now speaks proudly of "impressive kids."

In addition, the healthcare industry as a whole needs qualified people. The area hospital administrators want to try to keep educated youth in Flint, and they want to help youth become interested in the healthcare field. One hospital human resources vice president said that it is difficult to induce young people with talent to come to Flint. Thus, he views the program as an opportunity to develop skilled workers from the inside. Program graduates, some of whom will simultaneously pursue further education, are given "first crack" at the hundred or so entry-level positions open every year, such as orderlies, food service workers, and housekeeping aides (applicants for these jobs number in the thousands). If the graduates leave to attend college, the program developers hope that they will return to Flint, especially as the local program experience on their résumés will open doors for them.

Although the intent of the program is simply to expose students to the healthcare profession and have them learn through observation and limited hands-on activities, the employers have found that the students accomplish real work. While some hospital staff initially believed the students would be more trouble than they would be worth, over time, having an intern has come to be seen as a perk and not an obligation. The interns are not paid and the GASC performs all program administration (all that is asked of the students' supervisors is that they evaluate the students at the end of the internship), so the costs to the employers are minimal. At the HMO, the unpaid students substitute for paid temporary workers in some cases, so there is actually a cost savings to the firm. Genesys Hospital, which has now been participating in the program for four years, started with forty

students and has doubled that number over time because the individual departments reported good experiences with the interns.

Thus, all of the employer motivations discussed earlier can be applied: philanthropic, individual benefits, and collective. Hospitals want to contribute to the welfare of the community, especially if they can benefit public-relations-wise for doing so. All of these facilities continue their participation as they find that they can benefit from the students' labor. Finally, these employers are concerned about the quality of their current and future workforce and hope that locally trained youth will stay in the area. Local conditions in Flint are such that the health industry wants to attract and keep talented youth, and healthcare institutions compete for customers and for employees. Program coordinators know these things and use them to their advantage.

City-as-School

City-as-School (CAS) is an alternative New York City High School for 10th-12th grades that opened its doors in 1972. The Manhattan branch (there are sites in other New York City boroughs) that was studied enrolls approximately 650 students. This unique school for at-risk students awards high school credits for internships and the completion of a specified set of activities related to each internship. In-school classes are offered, but most students spend more time on the job than in the classroom. Before graduating, most students will have had eight to twelve different internships around the city. The school maintains a databank of over 350 employers who offer work-based learning experiences.

Because the students earn many, if not most, of their high school credits through work-based learning, the internships are not "jobs" but are called "learning experiences" (LEs). Since students are not technically "employed" (they are not paid), the employers are called "resources." The school internship coordinators are called resource coordinators (RCs); there are 14 RCs, each with the responsibility of placing and supervising thirty or more students every internship cycle. Most visit their assigned students at least once during the eight-week internship period. For each LE, students complete and submit a packet of written and oral activities that are created for the specific LE. For example, a student can receive a science credit by interning in a science museum and completing a packet of applied science exercises.[8] Many of these exercises typically require assistance by the employer, so he or she is involved in the student's academic work.

Despite the commitment required of employers, CAS has been able to recruit and retain a large number of employers over the years. RCs use

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[8] As another example, one student interning at an African dance center learned a particular dance, researched its country of origin and its meaning, and made a presentation to her RC. She also kept a daily journal of her tasks at the internship, and conducted a taped interview of a staff member.

word of mouth and the telephone book to make cold calls. They try to convince students' parents to involve their companies or the companies of friends. These methods appear to have worked because the school now receives many incoming calls from interested employers. Although some employers leave the program because of negative experiences such as student absenteeism or poor behavior, school staff asserted that the vast majority of employer turnover is due to firm relocations. The RCs no longer have to spend an inordinate amount of time recruiting employers; they spend more time retaining the ones they already have and supervising students.

One key to establishing a solid pool of employer participants is thorough screening. One RC told us that she makes sure employers are willing to make a contribution to the welfare of the young people. She tries to ensure that the workplace staff will work well with the teenagers and that they will be prepared for some of the problems these particular at-risk students have. Thus, the RCs do not have a hands-off policy when it comes to the resources. They spend time with newly involved employers to articulate how the student will fit into the organization and what type of tasks the student can perform. They take care in placing students with employers so that there will be a good "match." Once students begin their internships, the RCs frequently check on students' attendance and progress. In interviews, participating employers stated that they were pleased with their ease of access to the RCs.

This urban school's success in placing large numbers of student interns rests not only on employers' feelings of altruism towards inner-city youth, but also on the free help provided by the students. One employer said she was directed by one of her employees to CAS when she mentioned that she needed some extra help in the firm. The Director of Development at a nonprofit cultural center also said she participated because she needed office help; her staff had recently been cut almost in half. Despite the director's initial reason for contacting CAS, she also told us proudly of several instances in which her interns had turned their lives around for the better as a result of their experience. Thus, while employers participate to benefit from short-term free labor, they also want to help New York City youth.

We found at CAS that as employers participate over time and gain experience in organizing the duties and learning of the interns, they can get more value out of their involvement. At the hair-products testing salon, the student interns are supervised by the Director's assistant, who has created handouts that explain their duties and describe the operations of the facility. Therefore, while the organization of the students' work and the creation of written information required an initial investment of time on the part of the students' supervisor, time is saved in the long run by getting the interns off to a more efficient start.

The example of CAS, then, goes against the common wisdom: CAS asks a great deal of employer partners yet manages to retain them and recruit even more. CAS became established by finding employers willing to help troubled New York City youth in exchange for free assistance, and by using a personal, hands-on approach to the school-intern-employer relationship. Given the school's at-risk student population, its ability to place hundreds of interns every year demonstrates that employer recruitment is not an insurmountable obstacle.

Kalamazoo County Education for Employment

Education for Employment (EFE) in Kalamazoo, Michigan, is a school-to-work system founded on a strong relationship between educational institutions and the business community. Begun in 1986, at the time of our visit the system offered programs in 25 different career clusters,[9] and over 2,000 students in 8th-12th grades were enrolled. During their senior year, students take part in cooperative education, externships, or apprenticeships. Over one hundred employers offer work-based learning, and scores of other employers are involved through business advisory committees.

The history and development of the Kalamazoo County EFE program is a study in cooperation between education and business. Kalamazoo County's seven small rural school districts created a consortium through which to supply vocational education in 1982; this was expanded in 1986 with the support of the Chamber of Commerce to include two other school districts, the intermediate schools, and Kalamazoo Valley Community College. The consortium's philosophy is that *all* students need career/technical programs.[10] For each of the system's career areas, there is an advisory committee consisting of representatives from business, labor, and education. The advisory committee members review and plan curriculum, and assist in public relations, fundraising, and finding other business partners who will offer mentorships and internships to participating students. A Workforce Entry Advisory Committee oversees the work-based learning experiences offered to students.

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[9] These are agri science, auto body, auto technology, business services technology, construction trades, child care, commercial design, cosmetology, drafting and design, electromechanical technology, graphics communications, health occupations, heating and air conditioning, hospitality, law enforcement, machine tool, manufacturing cluster, marketing education, office occupations, paper technology, photography, radio broadcasting, T.E.A.M. plastics, theater technology, and welding.

[10] The assistant superintendent who runs the program says that he now avoids using the word "vocational" because it has a negative connotation and is viewed as a strategy for only some students.

Two of EFE's career fields were studied: (1) health occupations and (2) hospitality. In both, businesses provide the classroom space. Approximately 80 students participate each school year in the health occupations program, which began in 1989. At that time, labor shortages were expected to occur in the health field by the year 2000, so the Kalamazoo County Consortium, Bronson Health Care Group, and Borgess Medical Center agreed to create a health occupations program to introduce the field as a learning and work opportunity for the area's young people. During the first year of the two-year program, students take academic health-related courses at Bronson Hospital, learn core generic skills, and shadow health care professionals; during the second year, students take additional classes and complete a 350-hour internship. Teachers define specific competencies that are to be met through the work experience.

During the 1995-1996 school year, 41 students were enrolled in the hospitality program, which is housed in a Radisson Hotel and began in 1991.[11] This program is not yet running at capacity, which may have more to do with student interest and available classroom space than employer participation because the program instructor said they do not have difficulty recruiting employers to provide the unpaid internships. They use a novel recruitment method: Students request interviews with three hospitality employers, saying they are doing a research project. After the interviews, the students decide where they would like to intern. The program instructor then approaches the employer, saying the student has expressed an interest in an internship, and asks if they would be willing to cooperate. The instructor said she has been mostly successful with this strategy.

Kalamazoo's success in offering career education to thousands of students and work-based learning to hundreds is likely due to a systemic approach to education reform and a wide variety of employer recruitment efforts. The staff's approach to serving all students and "going to scale" has been an incremental one; the number and type of career clusters offered has increased and changed over time (in just the last few years, the number has increased from 14 to the current 25). While there has been an incremental approach regarding occupational offerings, the level and extent of school involvement has not proceeded incrementally because the establishment of the consortium has meant that all education players have been on board from the beginning. Instead of assigning employer recruitment to a handful of teachers or program coordinators, program personnel use their already-committed business contacts (who serve on committees) as well as the enrolled students to attain work-based learning placements. When employers are involved with programs from their inception, the programs have more legitimacy in the eyes of other employers.

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[11] The hospitality program includes three subfields: (1) the lodging industry, (2) food service, and (3) travel and tourism.

LaGuardia Community College

LaGuardia Community College was established in 1971 as the country's first community college with a mandatory cooperative education requirement; it enrolled 500 students that year. Today, it is nationally recognized as a leader in cooperative education and is one of the largest co-op programs in the United States. Student enrollment has grown to approximately 10,000, and every year 2,000 students are placed with over 300 employers. Individual internships often relate to the student's course of study, and students attend seminars in which they study issues such as workplace culture and career-building skills.

If City-as-School and Kalamazoo represent one end of the continuum regarding the involvement asked of their employer partners, LaGuardia represents the other end. The philosophy of the LaGuardia co-op program is that the internship experience should be as close as possible to a real job experience. Students interview for positions and, once hired, they are to be treated as if they are regular employees. Students are supposed to contribute to the needs of employers, and it is through the school-based co-op seminars that they are to find added educational value in the tasks they perform on the job. This translates into a hands-off attitude towards the employers on the part of program staff; staff communicate by telephone with student interns' supervisors but may not always make site visits.

In spite of the new attention being placed on work-based learning programs and their value, the LaGuardia co-op program has been suffering as of late. The cooperative education requirement of all students was recently decreased from nine credits to six, meaning that students have to complete only two internships now as opposed to three. Paid internships are more difficult to find, and increasing numbers of students are performing unpaid internships at the college itself.[12] In the past, the faculty could rely on a core of large employers willing to provide many internships quarter after quarter, but this is no longer true. Placements are not harder to come by, they are just more variable; for example, an employer may take several students one quarter, and none the next. The work of employer recruitment and student placement has thus become more difficult, as the faculty has to continually adjust to employers' needs for flexibility. In addition, there is greater competition in the area for both paid and unpaid internship slots.

The strategy the co-op faculty has tended to use to recruit new employers is the cost-benefit approach. Bringing up the ideas of "contributing to the community" and "social responsibility" are seen as insults—implications that the employer contributes nothing already. Instead, faculty point out that LaGuardia will screen the students, employers won't have to pay benefits, and no long-term commitment to an individual student is required.

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[12] During the 1995-1996 school year, 13% of all internships were performed at LaGuardia (246 out of 1,936 internships).

One faculty member stated that even this is a tougher sell than before because employers can hire people off the street with no benefits for short periods of time. Now, the staff argue that their students are a better bet than temps because they are more motivated. In addition, economic downturns have an effect. Employers do not wish to take interns during such time periods because their regular employees will resent them. They also might not have adequate staff to supervise the interns. However, the program can also benefit from economic downturns when employers' need for temporary workers increases.

In spite of these difficulties, the continuing existence of LaGuardia's cooperative education program demonstrates that it is possible to maintain for decades an internship program involving thousands of placements and hundreds of employers. Program coordinators follow and address employers' changing motivations for participation. At the same time, students are taught to be prepared for the transitory nature of the labor market, which further contributes to the emphasis on a "real world" experience. The experience of LaGuardia teaches us how a program can adjust over time to changes in economic and other conditions and continue to thrive.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Future Research

Employer recruitment is not an insurmountable problem. Several of the programs we studied have recruited and retained an adequate number of employers and, in some cases, have been able to sustain a high number of participants for many years. These programs have succeeded because of the staff's understanding of local economic conditions and their skill at adjusting their strategies accordingly when those conditions change, as well as their ability to form relationships with area employers. These educators have wisely gauged the amount and depth of involvement they can expect from employers and the type and level of returns the employers require in order to continue their participation.

If programs are to succeed and endure, the retention of employers is crucial because recruiting new partners is difficult and time-consuming. Careers in Health publicly recognizes its employer partners and helps the industry recruit new talent. Kalamazoo gives employers influence within the system. City-as-School retains employers through personal relationships and support, while LaGuardia Community College keeps employers participating by not asking too much of them. These different strategies reflect the different purposes of the internships and different incentives of the employers for their involvement. Further research should address the need to motivate employers to maintain their involvement and the related need to demonstrate and communicate increasing gains to employers over time.

It is good news that, for the most part, the internship placements in the programs we studied have not been in the traditional youth-employing sectors and occupations. Furthermore, participation in these programs seems to be associated with a cluster of progressive human resource practices. Not only are firms that use these practices more likely to participate, there is also evidence that they are more likely to provide higher quality internships. This suggests that it would be wise to focus recruitment efforts on such firms, as well as that recruitment may become easier if these practices spread, even if participation is not necessarily in the direct short-term interest of the employers. In addition, employer motivations for participation are rarely pure but are more likely mixed and can change over time. These motivations have an effect on the quality of programs and placements. Thus, employer participation cannot be studied separately from other program features and concerns.

It is likely that the employer partners initially recruited are those whose participation was won most easily. If that is the case, further recruitment is liable to be more difficult—especially considering the extent of the resources

expended to achieve the current level of employer involvement. Alternatively, as school-to-work becomes better understood and more well-known, it could be easier for program staff to find employer partners. Nonetheless, if work-based learning is to go to scale, more and stronger attempts must be made at marketing. In addition, there is some indication that programs are not taking full advantage of the employers they have already recruited. In our survey of participants, 10% said they would take more interns if they were available.

Although a substantial minority of firms surveyed reported that self-interest is the primary reason for their participation, for most employers the chief motivation remains philanthropic. The importance of a philanthropic emphasis is supported both by answers to direct questions and by the patterns of characteristics in the comparison of participating and nonparticipating firms. While these motivations have clearly carried these programs a long way, firms in the nonparticipating sample indicate that they would need more bottom-line-oriented arguments to convince them to join.

We clearly need more comprehensive analyses of the costs and benefits of participation in work-based learning programs. As programs grow, appeals to community service will be less and less effective, and it will become increasingly important to have data and arguments to support the claim that participation is in the best interest of the firm. However, an overemphasis on steps to make it easier for employers to participate could run the risk of promoting excessive selectivity for interns, thus barring many students who might particularly benefit from high-quality internship opportunities.

Most important, whether or not work-based learning can go to scale and endure will depend on whether it is perceived as improving learning. Therefore, future research in this field should focus on the following issues:

- ***Acceptance by Teachers, Counselors, Parents, and Students***
  Too strong an emphasis on employer participation can lead to neglect of other constituencies whose support is needed. In interviews with program staff, school counselors were repeatedly blamed for either not presenting school-to-work programs as an option or for advising students not to enroll in them. Some teachers still believe that students are missing the "real work" of the classroom when they leave the school to go to a workplace. Thus, programs can fail when not enough of an effort is made to win these constituencies' acceptance. Indeed, the lack of student and parent demand may be a larger problem for work-based learning programs than the recruiting and retaining of a significant number of employers. Thus, future research should investigate the opposition to these programs by educators, parents, and students.

- ***Integration Between Work-Based and School-Based Learning***
  Integration between academics and work-based learning, one of the aims of school-to-work reform, is not occurring. In the majority of the programs we studied, work-based learning is simply tacked on to some part of the student's day or week while the rest remains unchanged. Even when new curriculum is developed, the classroom and work-based portions, in most cases, exist separately from each other. While the coursework at some schools includes general references to work and careers, students' experiences at their workplaces are rarely discussed in the classroom.

  Therefore, we see a neglect of the academic side of school-to-work, as well as mixed efforts to create the connecting activities called for in the school-to-work legislation. This is disturbing, particularly as researchers are coming to believe that the school-to-work approach may teach academic skills better than traditional approaches. Bailey and Merritt (1997) have argued that the school-to-work strategy complements the "authentic teaching" or "learner-centered" approaches advocated by many innovative academic teachers. This goes to the question of the acceptance of school-to-work: If it is not seen as academically rigorous, teachers and parents will not support it, and it will fail.

- ***Program Quality***
  While work-based education is presumed to be good for students, what and how they are meant to learn in the workplace is often not specifically addressed either in the design or the operation of the programs. According to our data, almost half of the programs have learning or training plans tailored to each student, yet whether and how the presence of such plans facilitates the learning of skills is an open question. At some programs, the specifics of work-based learning are not addressed at all on the assumption that *something* will occur in the workplace that will be of value to the student. More research is needed on what actually occurs in the workplace; we need to understand if, what, and how students are learning there.

  Clearly, more quality control is needed. At some sites, staff answered questions about their program with the response, "Because the employers want it that way." School-to-work staff put a great deal of resources into determining the needs of local employers; the needs of the students must not come second. Additionally, we need better measures of quality. Although we used three measures of quality in this study, we did not measure the content or outcomes of the experience. A fundamental problem is a lack of good conceptualizations of what an internship should provide. Program operators have been reluctant to push the issue of

quality because of difficulties in recruiting employers. Our data suggest, however, that a substantial number of employers are already providing internships. Given the current levels of participation, program operators have an opportunity to shift some of their focus from recruitment to quality. Moreover, research and experimentation with work-based learning may yet lead to the development of approaches that will have both strong educational value and be practical in a wide variety of employment environments.

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